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ARTICLE



# The idea of Europe in a post-European era

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**ABSTRACT**

This article discusses the Idea of Europe as it is developed within the phenomenological tradition by Edmund Husserl, Jacques Derrida and Jan Patočka. It shows how Derrida and Patočka try to preserve the main elements of European culture, mainly rationality and openness – in Patočka's terms 'the care for the soul' – while at the same time avoiding Eurocentrism. According to Patočka, the care for the soul has been lost in modernity and needs to be restored in a revival of the idea of Europe in post-European times. In line with Derrida and Patočka, it is argued that in today's post-European world a dissemination of the ethical idea of Europe is going on that leads beyond the name of 'Europe,' searching for new singular articulations, for which a renewal of the old notion of 'care' is a good candidate.

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What can we say of the idea of Europe, today? Today we cannot ask this question without referring to the fragile and challenged situation of Europe's political and cultural institutions. It has become part of the European philosophical tradition, at least since the Enlightenment, that philosophical questions need to be related to the situation in which they are articulated. Through the centuries of modernity, man has become aware of his historical disposition and of the historical nature of philosophy. The question of the idea of Europe, therefore, cannot be separated from its current historical situation[1].

Already more than forty years ago the political and cultural position of Europe is characterized by Jan Patočka as being ' … definitely at an end.'[2] Therefore he speaks of 'post-Europe.'[3] For Patočka, the core of European culture is the idea of a rational and ethical way of life, which he calls, with a Platonic expression, the 'care for the soul'. In modern Europe, this 'care for the soul' has been lost, which eventually has led to the demise of Europe. The question now is whether this care can be re-invented in post-European times. In this article, I shall reinterpret this notion of post-Europe and its relation to the idea of Europe as 'care for the soul'.

First I shall briefly sketch, as a point of departure, the main elements of the idea of Europe as they have been developed by Edmund Husserl. Then I shall discuss the transformation of these features in texts of Jacques Derrida and Jan Patočka. This reflection will focus on the contemporary status of the idea of Europe in post-European times, especially with regard to the tension between the universality of this idea and its inscription

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and institutionalization in the history and culture of Europe. Finally, the question will be raised whether we can still refer to this idea by the name of 'Europe.'[4]

## 1. Husserl

The *locus classicus* of the reflection on Europe within the phenomenological tradition is Husserl's 1935 Vienna lecture on 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity.' In this text Husserl makes a distinction between Europe as a geographical continent and Europe as an idea. Husserl speaks about 'die geistige Gestalt Europas,' 'the spiritual shape of Europe,' which he describes as 'the unity of a spiritual life, activity, creation, with all its ends, interests, cares, and endeavors, with its products of purposeful activity, institutions, organizations.'[5] This 'unity of a spiritual life' is a teleological idea, immanent in the history of Europe, but with universal value, an idea of progress by rational insight – in Husserl's own words:

> the philosophical idea which is immanent in the history of Europe (spiritual Europe) or, what is the same, the teleology which is immanent in it, which makes itself known, from the standpoint of universal mankind as such, as the breakthrough and the developmental beginning of a new epoch – the epoch of mankind which now seeks to live, and only can live, in the free shaping of its existence, its historical life, through ideas of reason, through infinite tasks[6].

The universality of this idea does not consist in the absolute certainty of an objective scientific theory, but in the infinite task of a rational life, of '*ratio in the constant movement of self-elucidation*,' in the call for 'the ultimate self-understanding of man as being responsible for his own human being.'[7] Such a self-elucidation implies criticism and self-alienation as openness to a general validity beyond opinions that were traditionally taken for undisputable. Only that which is given with rational 'apodicticity' can achieve universal validity. Man can live a rational life, therefore, through '*self-understanding as being in being called to a life of apodicticity*.'[8]

This idea of a rational, spiritual life as openness and responsibility includes its own institutionalization in the European tradition. Husserl regards the rational and free spirit from the start as a European endeavor, rooted in ancient Greece. This is why such a universal idea of rational life can be indicated with the name of a geographical region, the continent *Europe*.

Husserl is very clear in his statement that the universal meaning and validity of this spirit transcend the geographical space of Europe: 'Thus we refer to Europe not as it is understood geographically, as on a map . . . '[9] Nevertheless, 'Europe' is and remains a geographical reference. This involves the risk of excluding specific groups or cultures from the European tradition, a trace of which can be found in the notorious passage on Inuit and Roma that immediately follows the last citation[10]. Here the inevitable relation between universality and its appearance and development in a singular tradition manifests itself as a tension.

As is well known, in Husserl's view the advancement of this rational spirit undergoes a fatal turn in early modern scientific thought. The idea of reason becomes narrowed to the scientific measurement of facts, which leads to what Husserl calls the crisis of the modern European sciences. A discussion of this interpretation of the history of European rationality, however, exceeds the limits of this article[11]. The question that will be discussed here, is: How do we inherit, today, this tradition, its crisis and its tensions?

## 2. Derrida

Derrida's reflections on the idea of Europe, in his *L'autre cap, The Other Heading*, focus on history and responsibility. For Derrida, the question of Europe and European culture is the question how to cope with its heritage. What do we want to preserve and maintain from Europe and its history, and what would have to change? How do we inherit Europe's legacy in a responsible way? Under the heading of a heading (*le cap*) Derrida discusses several problems of Europe's heritage, playing with the dissemination of the term *cap, caput*: head, direction, route, capital letter, money (*le capital*), capital city (*la capitale*). The responsibilities that come with the legacy of Europe are all characterized by Derrida as double binds or aporias.

One of these aporias concerns the friction between centralization and fragmentation of European culture, which brings Derrida to the device 'neither monopoly, nor dispersion.'[12] Another tension has to do with capital in the sense of money: what to do with the hegemony of capitalism and neo-liberalism in Europe at the end of the twentieth century? In Derrida's view, this hegemony needs to be balanced by a policy that strives for social and economic justice. Therefore, keeping alive the spirit of communism is one of the responsibilities that are included in the heritage of Europe. Again, this aporia asks for a nuanced response. Derrida wants to avoid both the terrifying totalitarian dogmatism of communism and neo-liberal ideologies that take advantage of the fall of communism[13].

He also addresses an aporia that comprises the main topic of this article: the double bind between universality and singularity. There is no claim to universality without its expression in a particular language and idiom, and there is no affirmation of a singular culture without a testimony of its universal value[14]. Derrida gives an extra twist to this tension by discussing the idea that Europe would lead the world towards a better future, that it would be the *cap* of world historical progress. The paradox of this position is highlighted clearly in a quotation of Paul Valéry, who describes that Europe has – and within Europe, France has – the pretention to go ahead of world history, having as its specialty a sense of the universal[15].

What does Derrida think of this aporetic sense of direction that we have inherited under the heading of 'Europe'? Derrida tries to avoid the too simple answers of eurocentrism and anti-eurocentrism. While keeping a critical distance, he endorses the advancement of democracy and human rights. At the same time, he wants to open up the notion of direction and heading, to make Europe susceptible to other headings (*l'autre cap*), and for routes that others might choose (*le cap de l'autre*). Moreover, the idea of a direction and a heading needs itself to be questioned by something else than a heading (*l'autre du cap*) – i.e. a relation of identity to its other that does no longer obey to the form, sign and logic of *cap*. With regard to the history and future of the idea of Europe, these questions are inevitable, and, whatever the answers may be, the question remains, beyond every answer[16].

Thus, Derrida radicalizes the Husserlian idea of Europe as a rationality that keeps looking for openness, responsibility and self-elucidation. According to Husserl this idea was a teleology immanent in the history of Europe. Derrida tries to open up this idea of openness by leading it beyond any teleology, by questioning teleology as such. He suggests that this questioning is not only the responsibility of Europe for its own legacy, it is what Europe, as responsibility itself, should stand for:

> And what if Europe were this: the opening unto a history for which the changing of the heading, the relation to the other heading or the other of the heading, is experienced as

> always possible? An opening and a non-exclusion for which Europe would in some way be responsible? For which Europe *would be*, in a constitutive way, the very responsibility? As if the very concept of responsibility were responsible, right up to its emancipation, for a European birth certificate?[17]

In short, the idea of Europe *is* responsibility, the responsibility to open up and renew itself, again and again, by critical rational reflection[18]. In Derrida, this reflection has changed from a search for apodicticity to an exploration of aporias. Actually, the search for conceptual clarity and apodicticity always necessarily gets stuck in aporias and double binds[19].

These aporias do not undermine the notions of responsibility and Europe, by making them completely relativistic. On the contrary, aporias like these are constitutive for responsibility. According to Derrida, a real decision can only be made if it is not pre-determined by an objective rule, if there is really something to choose: 'I will even venture to say that ethics, politics, and responsibility, *if there are any*, will only ever have begun with the experience and experiment of the aporia.'[20] Responsibility is aporetic in itself. At the end of *L'autre cap*, Derrida gives a whole list of aporetic duties, of which I mention a few here[21]:

- to welcome strangers in order to let them integrate and keep their otherness at the same time;
- to criticize both totalitarian and capitalistic 'dogmatisms' that jeopardize democracy;
- to accept the European heritage of democracy, not as given and accomplished, but as a promise of what remains to come;
- to tolerate and respect what refuses to place itself under the authority of reason, while remaining faithful to the ideal of Enlightenment, looking for a new Enlightenment;
- and, more in general: to respond responsibly to the call of a European heritage, while opening Europe for what is not European.

One of the paradoxes of Derrida's approach of Europe, as it culminates in this list of aporias, seems to be that it combines a highly abstract notion of openness with concrete political issues. As a result of this, the discussion of the idea of Europe is mixed up with political and cultural problems of institutions in Europe as a geographical unity. In this article, however, I only focus on Europe as name for the idea of a rational life.

There are important differences between Husserl's view of the history of this idea and Derrida's re-assessment of it. Whereas Husserl describes the history of Europe as driven by an inherent teleology, Derrida problematizes this teleology from within. Europe's history can no longer be taken as a history with a *telos* or *cap*, its heading has become an openness beyond any heading. And whereas Husserl shows how the idea of Europe gets stuck in a crisis in modernity, Derrida discerns several developments that are interwoven in modern Europe's history. Much more than Husserl, Derrida emphasizes the importance of the Enlightenment for European history and its influence on emancipation, democracy and human rights.

In other publications than *The Other Heading*, Derrida has depicted different views of Europe, especially of the world domination of forces that all have their origin in Europe. If we take together several texts in which Derrida discusses different elements of the idea of Europe – though not always under the heading of 'Europe' – we can sketch a more

complete picture of his thoughts on Europe. In *Spectres de Marx* Derrida has composed a table of 'ten plagues of the new world order' that scourge the world and are mainly caused by globalized capitalism[22]. In *Foi et savoir* Derrida refers to the 'strange alliance' of Christianity, secularization and 'tele-techno-scientific capitalism,' which he calls *mondialatinisation* (what might be translated as *globalatinization*) that dominates juridical and political discourses worldwide[23]. From a Husserlian point of view, the tendencies described by Derrida in such a critical way, can be seen as a result of the fatal turn that scientific rationality has taken in early modern Europe.

On the other hand, a critical approach of these developments presupposes another perspective that is European as well: a rational critical questioning that prolongs the idea of Europe as it was sketched by Husserl. Derrida's prolongation, however, is very different from Husserl's history of Europe. Whereas Husserl emphasizes the problematic development of the idea of rationality in early modern science, Derrida stresses another modern European movement: the Enlightenment. A 'new Enlightenment' should be invented, that keeps alive the spirit of rational criticism in an ever innovative way[24].

As a result, Derrida's reflections on Europe show us an alternative history, a complex intertwining of contradictory developments. We can discern here, on the one hand, a techno-scientific, economic and political domination of the world by, mainly western, multinationals and other forces, in one word globalization. On the other, there are tendencies like the spreading of democracy, political equality and human rights, including a critical reflection on the above mentioned political domination, as well as on its own openness – these might be seen as elements of the 'new Enlightenment' that Derrida was looking for. The discourse of human rights and equality, however, can as well be sustained and corrupted by global capitalist powers. This is at stake in the global dispersal of a universal idiom of international law, forgiveness and other ethical and political terminology, the above-mentioned *mondialatinisation*.

In conclusion, Derrida continues the phenomenological reflection on the idea of Europe, stressing its openness and (self)-critical rationality. In his approach, Europe should be seen as *being* this openness itself. The heritage of modern Europe is versatile: the critical spirit of the Enlightenment, as well as its propagation of human rights, bears the opportunity to be renewed, although it is overshadowed by a many sided (scientific, technological, political, religious, cultural) rationality of calculation and manipulation.

## 3. Patočka

Jan Patočka's reflections on Europe elaborate on Husserl's analyses and are constellated around the same themes as Derrida's, showing remarkable similarities but also many differences. Patočka follows Husserl by seeking the kernel of European culture in a rational way of life that searches truth beyond mere opinions, looking for a rational justification of beliefs and choices, for what is right beyond personal interests. Just like Husserl, he locates the roots of this rationality in ancient Greece. He finds a good articulation of this rational attitude in Plato's notion of 'the care for the soul,' which Patočka also discusses as 'spiritual life,' 'living in truth' or 'insight.'[25]

From the start, however, rational life, according to Patočka, is confronted with its limits, in the sense that man will never be able to survey the world as a whole. The rational 'apodicticity', which Husserl was looking for, cannot always be found. Patočka

criticizes the modern tendency towards subjectivism and 'Cartesianism' that he comes across in Husserl's philosophy. His alternative is an 'asubjective phenomenology' or 'phenomenology of the appearing as such,' in which he states that neither Husserlian consciousness nor Heideggerian *Dasein* plays the main role in the appearing of phenomena. The world as a whole has a primacy in the appearing, the human subject is only involved by the world in making things appear[26]. What makes us human is our soul, our ability to truth, that is, our relation to the field of appearing: humans can relate not only to the beings that appear but also to Being or to the appearing as such. This includes taking a position with regard to the world as a whole and to our own existence as a task. Patočka's asubjective phenomenology thus leads to a different version of the Husserlian notion of a rational life of self-elucidation through openness and responsibility. The pursuit of a maximum of rational clarity results in an oscillatory movement between radical questions and preliminary answers, between *epistēmē* and *doxa*. This attitude, the care of the soul, or the living in truth, is, according to Patočka, what constitutes the kernel of European culture[27].

This is not a static view on the idea of Europe. Like his teacher Husserl, Patočka discerns a historical development in European culture, which is taken as determining for mankind and for world history. The core of history as such is the history of Europe, that is the history of the care of the soul. This history is not a teleology. On the contrary, Patočka sees history as a continuous tendency of decline, against which the care of the soul has to resist.

In his fifth *Heretical Essay*, Patočka discerns three main periods in the history of the care for the soul. The first period starts in ancient Greek culture, when the supposed divine natural orderings of mythical culture are radically questioned for the first time. Here begins the search for a rational understanding of world structures and of human existence. The sacred mysteries of mythical culture were experienced in what Patočka calls the demonic and the orgiastic, events in which humans lose control and give in to sacred powers. But the rational questioning attitude enables humans to relate to the sacred in a rational and ethical way. The demonic and orgiastic power of, for instance, Eros is 'disciplined and made subservient' by subordinating it to the rational idea of the Good[28].

The second period is Christianity. The idea of the Good is replaced by a personal God, who endows humans with responsibility by a gift of love, beyond rational understanding. Humans are finite and mortal, their soul becomes characterized by an unfathomable depth, and they are part of an historical struggle between good and evil. Despite the restrictions of rational questioning by the Christian faith, Patočka regards the Christian version of the care of the soul as the highest result in the struggle against decline, mainly because of its 'abysmal deepening of the soul', combining the questioning rational attitude with the awareness of human finitude[29].

In modernity, however, the use of reason undergoes a radical change, it becomes disentangled from the care of the soul and deteriorates to a solely technological and instrumental reason:

> The great turning point in the life of western Europe appears to be the sixteenth century. From that time on another motif comes to the fore, opposing the motif of the care of the soul and coming to dominate one area after another, politics, economics, faith, and science, transforming them in a new style. Not a care *for the soul*, the care to

> *be*, but rather the care to *have*, care for the external world and its conquest, becomes the dominant concern[30].

The historical route of development that Patočka sketches, thus follows the main lines of Husserl's philosophy of history in his *Crisis of the European Sciences*: in early modernity, the concept of rationality takes a fatal turn[31]. Whereas Husserl focused on the development of scientific knowledge, Patočka broadens this to a cultural movement, combining Husserl's view on history with Heidegger's critique of modernity as a time of 'framing' or *Gestell*[32], a world in which things can only appear as objects of calculation, control and manipulation[33]. In Patočka's view, modern civilization is made possible by ' … the rise of an entirely new kind of rationalism, the only one we know today: a rationalism that wants to master things and is mastered by them.'[34]

In the fifth and sixth *Heretical Essays*, he outlines modern technological culture as one of decline. The enormous technological developments have not been balanced by an insight in its purposes and possible meanings. Since human freedom can now only be conceived in a negative way, as a 'freedom from …,' it gives way to experiences like boredom, decadency and meaninglessness. The domination by calculative, economic and instrumental rationality has led to a being dominated by gigantic anonymous technological powers that have no meaning or goal in themselves. One of the disastrous results of this development is the return of the demonic and orgiastic in huge orgies of violence in the world wars of the twentieth century that have led to the demise of Europe as a world power. The twentieth century has become a century of war, ' … an epoch of the night, of war and of death.'[35]

In different texts Patočka has given different nuances to the history of the care of the soul. In *Plato and Europe*, he mentions Democritus and Plato as two philosophers who have developed this idea in their own way. In *Europa und Nach-Europa*, he makes a distinction between the ethical and the epistemological side of rational reflection, taking Plato and Democritus as their first antagonists. In addition, he describes how in modern Europe the epistemological and technical trait of the idea of Europe completely overshadows the ethical side. Thus, the 'European principle' (the reflection that grounds action and thought by insight) can be divided into, on the one hand, Europe as a united political, social and spiritual reality (the institutionalizations of the ethical European spirit) and, on the other hand, the actual European heritage (*Europas Erbe*, what the inheritors actually have taken over and have taken for granted: science, technology, rational economic and social organizations)[36]. The generalization of this European heritage, in the latter sense, has gone together with the end of Europe as a historical world power. Patočka wants to reawaken the other aspect of European history: Europe as institutionalized ethical insight (*sittliche Einsicht*)[37].

In an earlier text from the 1950 s, *Supercivilization and its Inner Conflict*[38], Patočka calls the modern effort of technical and economical world domination a 'supercivilization.' He distinguishes between a moderate and a radical form of this rational civilization. Radical supercivilization claims that it can determine and control everything and solve all problems of life and humanity. Its moderate alternative is aware of its limits and tries to maintain an openness to culture. Whereas radical supercivilization tends towards totalitarianism, moderate supercivilization stands for liberalism, pluralism, democracy and human rights. The contrast

between these two tendencies, however, rests on a deeper problem of modern culture: it regards man as an individual atom in relation to other individuals and to natural facts and forces, it lacks the openness for a transcendence that is constitutive of the care of the soul. Moderate supercivilization has forgotten that

> . . . the individualism of Renaissance and Protestantism that finally serves as the basis for the conception of human rights, is anchored in a more profound level, where man is not indifferent towards man, in a level where one does not count with the usual and customary human "nature," but where one calls for the possibility and human capacity to resist the apparent necessity and absolute superiority[39].

Because of this subjectivist modern individualism, moderate supercivilization could not resist the power of its radical counterpart. The dialectical tensions between individual freedom and domination, which are inherent in modern culture, let radical supercivilization in the end prevail.

At the end of his life, however, in 'The Obligation to Resist Injustice'[40], a text that he has written for Charta 77, Patočka explicitly refers to the high standard of human rights, with an implicit reference to Kant:

> The idea of human rights is nothing other than the conviction that even states, even society as a whole, are subject to the sovereignty of moral sentiment: that they recognize something unconditional that is higher than they are, something that is binding even on them, sacred, inviolable, and that in their power to establish and maintain a rule of law they seek to express this recognition. [. . .] . . . already a hundred and eighty years ago, precise conceptual analysis made it clear that all moral obligations are rooted in what we might call a person's obligation to himself – which includes, among other things, the obligation to resist any injustice done him[41].

Despite its too subjectivist and individualist foundation, therefore, the idea of human rights still seems to refer to a transcendent validity. Although this last quotation has to be seen as an exception, one can find here at least a tension in Patočka's reflections on the Enlightenment.

In Patočka's varied analyses of modern European culture, however, the grand picture of the development of rational life remains the same: in modernity, the care of the soul is lost and a radical calculative and technical rationalism takes over European culture. This results in a very dark portrayal of Europe in the twentieth century, a century ruled by the dark powers of war. All the 'good causes' to fight for, 'all the ideas of socialism, of progress, of democratic spontaneity, of independence and freedom,' the ideals of 'day, life, peace' are meaningless in themselves. They serve as ideologies that hide the forces of total mobilization, the rationality that makes even life and death calculable, the forces that 'plan death impersonally and statistically, as if they were merely a reassignment of roles.' In short, what stands for day, life and peace is in service of night, death and war, of the unleashing of forces of the 'Age of Energy'[42].

As a result, Europe has lost its global dominance, lost its colonial empires and its prestige. It may seem that after the two World Wars finally peace has come to Europe, but Patočka does not agree with such a suggestion. Europe is only 'in a state of demobilization,' but the war, the twentieth century as war, has continued as a cold war and in the form of oppressing global economic and political relations. As long as humans are concerned with their lives and their possessions, life will always lead to war:

> Life would so much like just to live at last, but it is precisely life itself which gives birth to war and cannot break free of it with its own resources. [...] War as the means of releasing Force cannot end[43].

But has the second half of the twentieth century not shown immense economic growth and prosperity in Europe, as well as cultural democratization in Western Europe? According to Patočka, however, this prosperity is directly linked to the oppression of other parts of the world, just like the growing democracies of the nineteenth century had built huge colonial empires:

> The gigantic work of economic renewal, the unheard-of, even undreamed-of social achievement which blossomed in a Europe excluded form world history, shows that this continent has opted for demobilization because it has no other option. That contributes to the deepening of the gap between the *blessed haves* and those who are dying of hunger on a planet rich in energy – thus intensifying the *state of war*[44].

As long as modern humanity takes 'to live and to have' as the main goals of its existence, life will always be dominated by the forces of war, even if it masks itself as peaceful demobilization:

> War is here showing its 'peaceful' face, the face of cynical demoralization, appealing to the will to live and to have [...], chaining humans to life and rendering them most manipulable[45].

Since Europe has lost its role as *the* economic and political power in the world, Patočka speaks of Post-Europe. The one-sided development of the 'European principle' has expanded around the world and at the same time outstripped Europe as a geographic power[46].

The inheritors are not only Europe's 'legitimate descendants' (North-America), but also 'pre-European' cultures (Asia and Africa). According to Patočka, this is not well acknowledged in historical and political reflections in the second half of the twentieth century. He refers to the historian Geoffrey Barraclough and to a discussion between Raymond Aron and Herbert Marcuse, who all see positive challenges in the new developments, but take too much of a European perspective:

> Three things have to be objected against Barraclough's effort to write a history of the present that establishes a shift of the center of world power from Europe to non-Europeans and discovers a new world situation. Firstly: he supposes one humanity as an actually already Europeanized humanity. Secondly: he takes the European historical periodization without further ado as world historical, without considering the possibility, or even necessity, that there might be a pre-European, a European (antiquity, middle ages, modernity) and a post-European historical period. Thirdly: he cannot really outline the current situation, since he leaves aside that against which it inherently reacts[47].

Patočka's *Europa und Nach-Europa* is an effort to outline an alternative view that shows the core of the idea of Europe, against which the developments described by Barraclough and discussed by Aron and Marcuse, react from the inside[48]. As we have seen, this core is the care for the soul. The main question Patočka brings to the fore in his texts on Europe and post-Europe, therefore, is this: 'Can the care of the soul, which is the fundamental heritage of Europe, still speak to us today?'[49] Is it possible to revive another understanding of human life, a spiritual life of rational insight, a life of responsible self-

understanding that is able to open itself to transcendence, to lasting values that lie beyond its own urge to survive?

Since a reawakening of this insight always remains possible, Patočka does not give up hope. We can find a testimony of this hope at the last two pages of the fifth *Heretical Essay*, where he refuses to answer the question in the title of this essay – 'Is Technological Civilization Decadent, and Why?' – with a clear yes, because it is still possible to understand human life and history[50]. The even darker description of the twentieth century as war in the sixth essay also discusses the front experience in the first world war as an experience of freedom and as a possible 'means to *overcome force*'[51]. Exactly at the deepest point of the decline of European history, this experience shakes and shocks the illusive ideals of peace and light, and opens up the possibility of a conversion toward a new rational insight in human existence. This momentum, however, did not lead to a decisive historical turn.

> Why has this grandiose experience, alone capable of leading humankind out of war into a true peace, not had a decisive effect on the history of the twentieth century, even though humans have been exposed to it twice for four years, and were truly touched and transformed thereby?[52]

The answer Patočka gives to his own question, is that these are individual experiences that need to be translated in a common and shared experience, a new common movement of those who don't believe anymore in the dead end of European modernity.

> The means by which this state is overcome is the *solidarity of the shaken*; the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what life and death are all about, and so what history is about. [...] Only one who is able to grasp this, who is capable of conversion, of *metanoia*, is a spiritual person[53].

If many people share the same loss of belief in the ideologies of techno-scientific and economic forces, are 'shaken in their faith in the day, in "life" and "peace,"' then a powerful reaction against 'Force' should be possible. This reaction can only have a negative form. It has to be a denial of the permanent mobilization of technical forces and economic organization and cannot offer a concrete positive alternative in terms of a new goal to strive and fight for. It can only reawaken the awareness of man as open to the field of appearing, to critical rational responsibility:

> The solidarity of the shaken can say "no" to the measures of mobilization which make the state of war permanent. It will not offer positive programs but will speak, like Socrates' *daimonion*, in warnings and prohibitions. It can and must create a spiritual authority, become a spiritual power that could drive the warring world to some restraint, rendering some acts and measures impossible[54].

In this context Patočka speaks of sacrifice as an action that cannot be positively understood from a calculative point of view[55]. Those who dare to sacrifice what has economic value for them, for example, their career, will 'find themselves forced to separate truth and the public realm, have forced upon them a state of war, dictatorship from within and from without, secret diplomacy, lying, and cynical propaganda'[56]. Thus, even in the era of Post-Europe, there is still hope for a cultural conversion, although this was not the outcome of the front experience. A 'solidarity of the shaken' is still called for.

A proper historical understanding of post-Europe, as we have seen in Patočka's criticism of Barraclough, should be open for other perspectives, also perspectives from pre-European cultures. A revival of the care for the soul might originate in different places than expected from a European point of view. This is also what post-Europe means: not only the decline of political dominance, and not only an analysis of the deplorable state of the idea of Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, but also a new phase in world history, where a renewal of spiritual life might come from non-European cultures.

In order to be susceptible to new forms of a rational life in truth, we need to understand history as 'nothing other than the shaken certitude of pre-given meaning'[57]. A good understanding of history is neither idealistic nor materialistic. The powers of history, Patočka states, are not 'economic-objective' but a 'collective-subjective phenomenon': 'The economic relations and production powers only deliver the general framework in which the struggle for power unfolds'[58]. Decisive in history is the ethical act and its historical sedimentation that resists the historical tendency towards decay:

> It is important to understand that historical insight is not knowledge of "ideas," that history is not about "knowledge" and its application, but that it is a matter of insight in the profound ethical relations of rise and fall, of the possibility of freedom and its undermining. Ethical insight [*sittliche Einsicht*] is nothing but a sedimentation and codification of its experience: it is all about the rise and fall of the human soul . . . [59]

The question that Patočka leaves for us, then, forty years after his reflections, is whether today we can discern some sedimentations of this ethical insight, some signs of a reawakening of the care of the soul in a post-European world.

## 4. The Idea of Europe in a post-European era

Before taking a look at the contemporary relevance of Patočka's and Derrida's reflections on the idea of Europe, it is good to make a comparison between them. Both emphasize Europe as rationality, responsibility and openness. An important difference can be found in the place of the Enlightenment in these reflections. For Derrida, the ideals of Enlightenment are of immense importance for the idea of Europe. They stand for critical openness and continuous correction. Perhaps surprisingly, Patočka hardly mentions the Enlightenment in his books on Europe[60]. The rise of the democracies and of constitutional states in Western Europe since the nineteenth century, as well as the institutionalization of freedom of speech and of other human rights, are developments that have sprung from the Enlightenment and that can hardly be overlooked as sedimentation of the ethical idea of Europe, of a life in truth and insight. Patočka, however, stresses that the European democracies were also imperial regimes and in the twentieth century mainly defended the status quo instead of renewing it[61]. Even more, the ideals and achievements of the Enlightenment were not strong enough to guide the powers that were unchained by modern science and technology, mainly because modern subjective individualism has lost track with the care for the soul and is the counterpart of techno-scientific rationalism.

Thus, in short, whereas Derrida highlights the role of the Enlightenment in Europe and discusses both the negative sides of globalization and the positive potentials of the spirit of the Enlightenment – although they are often contaminated by economic and

ideological forces –, Patočka underlines the fall of Europe, the moral decline that mirrors its technological and economic successes, and also contributed to Europe's self-destruction in war. For Patočka, the freedom of Enlightenment and the dominance of techno-scientific force are two sides of the same coin of modernity.

But the passage on human rights in Patočka's Charta 77 manifest suggests that it must be possible to connect the idea of the care for the soul with important notions of the Enlightenment, like liberty and individual rights, not by simply repeating them, but in order to renew, ameliorate and sustain these notions – although Patočka nowhere explicitly elaborates on this. Such a new justification of human rights should not be based on modern individualism, but on an understanding of human existence as a surrender to others and as openness to the fundamental level of appearing, as care for the soul[62]. A 'new Enlightenment,' to use Derrida's expression, would then be part of a new phase in the history of the care for the soul.

Despite Patočka's criticism of modernity and despite Derrida's critique of *mondialatinisation*, therefore, it is possible to find connection with the 'sedimentation and codification' of 'ethical insight,' like the United Nations and several charters of human rights. In the twenty-first century one can see a steady growth of the institutionalization of international law. The United Nations have played an important role in this development, which has not only led to lawsuits in the International Court of Justice in The Hague where crimes against humanity are successfully sentenced, but which has also inspired non-European tribunals. To give just an example, in May 2016 the former dictator of Chad, Hissène Habré, has received a life sentence for crimes against humanity, torture and war crimes. This conviction was given by judges of the Extraordinary African Chambers in the Senegal court system, also called Universal Court, and which is an initiative of both Senegal and the African Union. This was the first universal jurisdiction case to proceed to trial in Africa. Universal jurisdiction is a principle of international law that allows national courts to prosecute the most serious crimes even when committed abroad, by a foreigner and against foreign victims. This innovation in international law in Africa is not simply exported by Europe, but it is inspired by a notion of universal international justice that has its historical roots in the idea of Europe. This is just an example of the prolongation of what we might call an enlightened idea of justice beyond Europe and largely independent from Europe, in other words, a step in the post-European development of the institutionalization of rational life.

Another example of this institutionalization can be found in the twenty-first century art world. Since Enlightenment and Romanticism, art has become the sphere of free expression that find its goals in itself, is innovating itself again and again, and is also a source for critical reflection. In recent years, more and more non-European arts and artists are getting access to the international art world which was until recently still dominated by western cultures. The Venice Biennale, for example, testifies of the growing number of non-Western artists that participate in the realm of free artistic expression that used to be a Europe-centered bulwark[63].

The partial inclusion of Enlightenment in the history of the care for the soul, therefore, sheds light on the ongoing development of the idea of Europe in a post-European era. Therefore, we have to take the reflections of Patočka and Derrida one step further, by questioning the name itself of 'Europe': is it still necessary to connect the ideas and ideals of openness, insight and life in truth to the name of 'Europe'?

Derrida still seems to do this, in a paradoxical way. In his view, Europe needs to be opened to what is not European, but at the same time he calls this openness itself Europe[64]. Patočka speaks of post-Europe, but with this term he mainly refers to the loss of political power of European states, as well as the situation of world history after the demise of the idea of Europe. If we recognize in 'post-Europe' a new phase in world history where a renewal of spiritual life might come from non-European cultures, then we can ask: Do we still have to refer to the idea of openness and insight with the name of 'Europe'? The answer is: no, although we can make an exception. In the context of European culture and politics, the name 'Europe' still makes sense. For European politicians and philosophers, the inheritance of Europe requests to keep the idea of Europe alive. This is the responsibility of European intellectuals, to hold on to the idea of Europe as responsibility[65]. But from a global point of view, we can disconnect the idea of a life in care, truth and insight, of radical openness and responsibility, from the name of 'Europe' to which it was attached for so long. In fact, at least parts of its ethical sedimentation have already entered a post-European phase.

Rodolphe Gasché gives several reasons to continue designating this idea with the name of Europe. It would be ahistorical, e.g. to ignore its European descent and birth certificate[66]. His main argument, however, is based on the intrinsic link between the singular and the universal:

> By labeling this conception "Europe," one acknowledges the intimate connection of all thought [...] to a singular "agent" [...], thereby guarding the concept from becoming abstract and forcing the particular into subservience and submission[67].

But at the same time, because of the openness of this same idea, 'the name *Europe* must also be abandoned'[68]. Finally, Gasché concludes:

> In fact, it is not simply a question of either being faithful to the memories of Europe or of preferring the openness of the open to its opposite. Rather, the question is how to meet both contradictory exigencies of preserving and abandoning Europe's name at the same time[69].

Gasché's arguments, however, to hold on to the name of 'Europe,' are not convincing. Giving op Europe's name does not mean to 'think ahistorically.' On the contrary, it means to acknowledge the new historical developments of this idea that have led it beyond Europe. In addition, the connection between an idea that claims universal validity and its 'singular agent,' can be maintained as well by other names, be they 'living in truth,' 'care for the soul,' or 'new Enlightenment.' In contrast to Gasché's conclusion, therefore, I argue that in today's post-European world a dissemination of the ethical idea of Europe is going on that leads beyond the name of 'Europe,' searching for new singular articulations. Today, reflecting on the ethical idea of Europe, we can say that it has started a post-European phase.

## Notes

1. In *L'autre cap*, Jacques Derrida begins and ends with the question of the situation of Europe and of democracy, today; cf. Derrida *L'autre cap*, 7–9, 12, 18, 21, 77, 103, 123-124/1-3, 5, 13, 16, 79, 84–85, 109. In the same line of thought, Michel Foucault has linked the Enlightenment with the question of the present situation; cf. Foucault, 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?'. Jan Patočka starts his book *Plato and Europe* with a comparable remark on

philosophy as an enlightening reflection on the situation of mankind: 'To philosophize, I think, means to meditate within the entire situation, and to be its reflection'; cf. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 3.
2. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 9.
3. Patočka, *Europa und Nach-Europa*.
4. This question was also raised by Gasché, *Europe*, 8: ' . . . one of the questions that we will have to take up [. . .] is why one should still refer to all these exigencies that form the cluster of what "Europe" refers to, by the name of *Europe*.'
5. Husserl, *Krisis*, 318/273.
6. Ibid., 319/274.
7. Ibid., 273, 275/338, 340.
8. Ibid., 275/340; cf. Gasché, *Europe*, 21–91.
9. See note 5 above.
10. 'In the spiritual sense the English Dominions, the United States, etc., clearly belong to Europe, whereas the Eskimos or Indians presented as curiosities at fairs, or the Gypsies, who constantly wander [*herumvagabundieren*] about Europe, do not'; cf. Husserl, *Krisis*, 318-19/273.
11. For a thorough discussion, see, e.g. Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection*.
12. Derrida, *L'autre cap*, 41-43/38-41.
13. Ibid., 56-57/56-57; and cf. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 145-149/110-113.
14. Derrida, *L'autre cap*, 71-72/72-73.
15. Ibid., 71-73/72-74.
16. Ibid., 20-22/14-17.
17. Ibid., 22/17.
18. Gasché, *Europe*, 6–7, 14, 265–338.
19. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*
20. Derrida, *L'autre cap*, 43/41.
21. Ibid., 75-78/76-80.
22. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 129–155.
23. Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 23, 39–41, 47–49, 66, 104–108; *L'Université sans condition*, 12–13, 51–60.
24. Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie*, 64, 80, 95–97; and *Foi et savoir*, 17, 62–63.
25. Patočka, *Plato and Europe; Europa und Nach-Europa*. These terms are not exactly synonyms, but cover more or less the same idea.
26. Patočka, *Vom Erscheinen als solchem*; cf. Mensch, *Patocka's Asubjective Phenomenology*; and Učník, Chvatík and Williams, *Asubjective Phenomenology*.
27. Patočka, *Plato and Europe; Europa und Nach-Europa*.
28. Patočka, *Heretical essays*, 103–6.
29. Ibid., 106–8.
30. Ibid., 83.
31. Husserl, *Krisis*, 18-104/21-100.
32. Heidegger, "Frage nach der Technik."
33. Patočka, *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, 327–39; and *Liberté et sacrifice*, 277–324.
34. Patočka, *Heretical essays*, 110.
35. Ibid., 120.
36. Patočka, *Europa und Nach-Europa*, 211.
37. Ibid., 213.
38. Patočka, *Liberté et sacrifice*, 99–177.
39. Ibid., 165, my translation from the French.
40. Patočka, *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, 340–2.
41. Ibid., 341, 342.
42. Patočka, *Heretical essays*, 124–34.
43. Ibid., 132.

44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., 133.
46. Patočka, *Europa und Nach-Europa*, 211–12; and *Liberté et sacrifice*, 135.
47. Ibid., 227.
48. Ibid., 218–27.
49. Patočka, *Plato and Europe*, 14.
50. Patočka, *Heretical essays*, 117–18.
51. Ibid., 130.
52. Ibid., 131.
53. Ibid., 134–35.
54. Ibid., 135.
55. Patočka, *Liberté et sacrifice*, 309–24.
56. Patočka, *Heretical essays*, 133.
57. Ibid., 118.
58. Patočka, *Europa und Nach-Europa*, 229, my translation.
59. Ibid., 230, my translation.
60. In the 1940 s Patočka wrote a few historical studies that emphasize the versatility of the Enlightenment, in which his later criticism of modernity is already pre-figured; cf. Patočka, "Aufklärung," 365–85; and *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, 157–74.
61. In his analysis of the origins of the First World War, Patočka writes: 'Understandably, derivatives of other, older convictions of Christian origins were also present, democratic ideas of the Enlightenment on the one hand, theocratic-hierarchic ideas on the other; yet when we look at the state of affairs realistically, noting that the democratic states of Europe were also the most vigorous representatives of Europe's imperial idea, their claims to democracy begin to appear as components in their defense of the global status quo'; cf. Patočka, *Heretical essays*, 121.
62. Mensch, *Patocka's Asubjective Phenomenology*.
63. For a survey of the recent history of the Venice Biennale, see "La Biennale di Venezia, History 1895–2017," accessed 23 March 2018, www.labiennale.org/en/history/recent-years. The 2015 edition is for the first time curated by an African curator, Okwui Enwezor. Another example is the international fame of the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, who shows the social and political importance of free artistic expression.
64. For a more detailed discussion of Derrida's ideas on the pros and cons of the name of 'Europe,' cf. Gasché, *Europe*, 265–338.
65. 'Originating in Europe, the idea of "Europe" as the idea of the world is, first of all, a challenge to the European', Gasché, *Europe*, 344.
66. Gasché, *Europe*, 342.
67. Ibid., 343.
68. Ibid., 347.
69. Ibid.

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